

# the Socialist

medication assault stress low mood  
numb veterans symptoms  
disturbance  
post traumatic stress disorder  
drug addiction  
panic  
cortex  
avoidance  
accidents  
TOO TIRED TO CARE  
diagnosis  
active





## | editor's note |



Some of the most conscientious and energetic people I've ever met are socialists. So when a comrade said to me, "Sometimes I think that people are just too tired to care," I wondered how many of us feel that way, what makes us feel that way, and what we do to pick ourselves up again. Those questions inspired this issue.

Rather than approach this subject as something negative, we purposefully looked for examples of experiences that can help us through burnout; for examples of folks whose seemingly superhuman tirelessness is more human than you might think; and for examples of folks in the SP who can help us keep the faith during tough times.

If there is a common theme in what we found, it is this: Once you open your eyes to the injustices and atrocities created by capitalism, racism, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. it is nearly impossible to be apathetic -- at least for long.

Sometimes we have to step back and breathe. Sometimes we need to indulge in the frivolous to reignite our fire. Sometimes we need to dance. Whatever it is that keeps you going, do it. But remember: We can't afford to stand still for too long.

Solidarity forever,  
— Lynn



## features

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# Too Tired to Dance?

by  
**JEN MCCLELLAN**



Atascadero. Oak trees, blue jays, and horses incite reflection. Whenever I am up here it is about visiting family and tracing my roots. A history gives one direction for the future, I have found.

Last time I was here we waded through ancient photo albums and I saw my grandma's (mom's mom) German heritage laid plainly in the hair and cranial structures of everyone from great aunts and uncles to present day cousins. I spent some time with Nietzsche that trip, and found it fitting that I'd previously taken a liking to Hesse.

This time, however, I am to gain a more empirical knowledge, and from my dad's side. This weekend I help build a temporary Native American style village, where I will dance, trade, sweat, eat and commune for three days.

Friday we leave Atascadero, drive over the grade, through Arroyo Grande (the "big ditch") where I grew up, to Lopez Lake where my dad took my brother and I when we were little to look at the night sky.

When my mom and I arrive, we recognize old faces, old friends, and new faces, young faces.

Grandmother Hua greets us with some words of wisdom about the crazy times we are experiencing and I think about what is happening this weekend — UN Climate summit and marches.

The smell of body odor, tea, and sage fills my nostrils as I imagine I am acting in solidarity with climate actions by coming here away from the city and all the bustling that comes with that, to kick it with mother earth and learn, from and with these native and wandering peoples, how to tune into natural harmonies.

Grandfather Woebleza speaks about prophecy being a kick in the ass to get us motivated and moving. He shows an old prophetic painting and speaks about climate change, war, corruption in religious institutions, and other familiar obstacles that the art has predicted.

My favorite part is if you turn the painting upside down, or if you stand on your head to look at it,

it becomes the tree of life! You see the reemergence of the sun dance! And a womb that symbolizes women's power and rebirth, and he says, there is a message that emerges of all the men standing up and saying to all the world's leaders that we are not going to war anymore — that it is time to teach peace, honor, and integrity again.

We circle up in the perfect shade of a family of oaks to pass the pipe in sacred ceremony. One by one we are smudged (a ritual performed with sage and a taxidermied wing of a special bird) to purify and ready our spirits for prayer. An inner circle of Grandmothers prepares the pipes. One goes around. We pray one by one as we exhale. Some pray for water (we are in a drought), some for health and for their families, some for empowerment for us all and ability to adapt to this ever-changing existence.

It feels like hours pass but it could also have only been minutes, when we come full circle. I don't know. I lose time here; I'm not the only one.

I am inclined to eat or smoke a cigarette or busy myself with something. I write. I climb rocks. I play guitar. So do others.

I find myself in the right place to join a roundtable discussion about sustainable community. Here I hear solutions. I hear my brothers and sisters recognize that individualistic living doesn't work. There is speaking out against Monsanto. There is advocacy for Earthships.

A sister who describes herself as "fun size" rolls me a tiny cigarette graced with white sage and an elder speaks against patriarchy. After a round of introductions I feel at home.

By the end of this first day I am tired and hungry but smiling. We pot luck for dinner. We circle around the patio, a hundred or so of us (the great majority women) and give thanks for our feast. We let the elders go first. We dig in. A new friend, a cross dressing beauty named Timmy lets me have the last piece of corn bread.

After dinner is open mike. It goes on and on and on into the night. We don't stay until the end.



The next day we do a lot of resting and getting to know each other before dusk. As the sun goes down we split. Over one hundred and twenty women head to the village area while the brothers go to the area on the other side of some rock formations where they will keep physical and spiritual guard for us throughout the night.

We have several lodges, including Moon Lodge (for women who have had their moon), Grandmother Lodge (for our elder sisters), an unofficial snack and water lodge, Wellness Lodge (with first aid and caffeinated tea), a message tent, Sweat Lodge (which holds two sweats, one for older returning dancers and one for women on their moon and new dancers), and — my favorite — Drum Lodge.

Once the sun goes down and the drums start, we circle a GIANT fire pit surrounded by meaningful herbs and powerful energy directing crystals and stones. Some circle clockwise to add to and build the energy of the dance, and some go counter clockwise to let go of anything they've been carrying and now have been given permission to release. I move freely and smile widely at the way people are guided by their bodies, as they seem to be obeying drum and spirit rather than by the usual cerebral command.

I only stop dancing to drink water, drum, and sweat. There are three drums played by two drummers each. These drums play the heartbeat of the dance. A steady, unchanging, unifying: bum bum, bum bum. When someone gets tired the lodge guardians yell "DRUMMER!" and someone comes running. There is an offering of chocolate given to drummers (I eat some spicy dark chocolate with cherries in it!) and songs are sung by dancers in various places and motions in order to help us keep the beat. Other instruments are improvised on — a flute, another different type of drum. ...

After sweat, just before dawn I drum myself into a different consciousness. My arm moves rhythmically, driven by muscle memory, and I find myself in a room with wooden floors. I am approached by a teacher, who holds out a book for me to see. I shake my head though and say, "No. I can't study now, I have to play the drums."

The sister drumming with me brings me back to the dark foggy morning reality saying, "I find drumming makes it harder to stay awake." And I mumble something deliriously in return.

The sun doesn't rise, but the fog around us slowly becomes illuminated and we begin to be able to see each other's faces again. Goofy smiles all around.

Once the drums stop the men come up over the ridge, stand on top of the rock cliffs overlooking us, and sing us good morning. Some sisters cry and laugh simultaneously. We are all filled with gratitude to these men for allowing us this safe space to do our most important healing work.

The last thing that happens before breakfast, and the thing that hits me the hardest, is when we snake out of our circle. We place our left hands over our hearts and hold our right hands out in front of us. The circle breaks as one by one sisters move to the other end of the circle (going like one does high-fiving the other team after a game).

One by one my sisters come before me. Some sing. Some can hardly contain the smiles on their faces. All are exhausted. A few though ... a few strike through my own fatigue when my eyes meet theirs to see a salty liquid welling up and overflowing. Compelling tears. Several times throughout the night I asked myself, "Why are you doing this?"

That is when it hits me.

Maybe it is possible to be too tired to care. Maybe things like work and school and consumerism does wear us down, hollow out our bones, steal our strength, hunch us over, and make gravity seem heavier than it really is. But don't worry, I know the secret. I have the map to the fountain of youth. It's us. It's in all of us — together.

If we have a strong spiritual community, or one unified by an honest and humble cause, any actions taken to cultivate that community defy gravity.

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# Understanding Collective Barriers and Facing Them Together

by  
TINA PHILLIPS



With all the injustice going on in the world right now, some people might be wondering why more people haven't stood up to fight. It is easy to judge others, but what many people don't realize is there are legitimate reasons and barriers why more people do not push back against oppression. Some of the reasons are psychological and go deep to the core of who we are as human beings and how we respond to stress and perceived threats at a systemic level.

As capitalism advances and wealth inequality grows, more people are struggling just to get through the day. If workers fight back or complain, the owners of production and the government -- who work in tandem to maintain their hegemony and hierarchy -- work hard to suppress us.

It seems harder nowadays to put up a resistance of any kind. Protesters from the Occupy movement to the streets of Ferguson, Missouri have been beaten, sprayed with pepper spray, shot with rubber bullets, and arrested for simply demonstrating their constitutional rights to free speech and assembly. The police have become militarized and can easily get away with abuses of power. People who bravely choose to fight back could face violence, jail, or both. That's enough to keep most people in line and far away from resistance.

Social control is out of control. People saw what happened to those involved in the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war movement, and to the Black Panthers. Many were systematically murdered, systemically suppressed, and systemically eliminated. Any threat against the established order, economic exploitation, and capitalist rule is crushed, creating a state of fear and paralysis. Scare tactics are effective tools of suppression; it's enough to create apathy and acquiescence. People give up and give in when faced with overwhelming forces.

If people feel powerless, they are powerless. It is very much a mind game. If people feel they lack control, they will lack control. This is at the very core of social control: Those in power know how psychological warfare works, and they use the media, the police, and other tactics, to keep people hopeless.

## **Social, Structural & Systemic Shackles**

Class oppression, economic inequality, institutionalized racism, sexism and patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia are all examples of social, structural, and systemic forces that work together to keep people down.

From in-your-face discrimination to everyday microaggressions, people are made to feel in no uncertain terms that they going to be judged and punished for who they are. These forces are marginalizing and ostracizing, keeping us locked into our own social circles and avoiding stepping out of our comfort zones due to fear and anxiety.

Many people have shut down as a form of self-protection and self-defense. They no longer trust other people. Since any social movement is based on mutual trust and solidarity, those who have built brick walls around themselves to avoid pain are not likely to participate. So many people are just trying to survive that helping to save the world is just too much of a burden to bear.

## **The Walking Wounded**

It is my assertion that many people are the walking wounded. More people than we can imagine are suffering with from the effects of trauma: The National Center for PTSD estimates that 7-8% of Americans face Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and 60 percent of men and 50 percent women experience at least one trauma in their lives. Most people think PTSD is something soldiers develop as a result of experiencing combat, but PTSD is a common reaction to any major trauma. In fact, the National Council on Disability reports that foster children have "twice the rate of PTSD" than combat vets.

Besides social systems creating trauma, people's personal lives, every day experiences, and struggles have traumatized them. According to Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, one in three women and one in six men have experienced sexual trauma. Those who experience abuse, neglect, rape, or are in a situation where their agency is taken away from them can suffer the effects of



trauma. A survey of “inner city kids” by the Family-Informed Trauma Treatment Center revealed that more than 80 percent have experienced one or more traumatic events.

Many of us face a constant, grinding stress just trying to survive. There is so much effort required to feed and house ourselves and loved ones: getting up early, working hard and laboring for long hours takes a toll physically and psychologically. The exploitation and indignities that people face in the workplace – low wages and lack of power -- wear down our self-worth and compounds over time. There is only so much a human being can take.

### **Collective Social Trauma & Learned Helplessness**

As a society, we may very well be suffering from mass collective social trauma.

Algerian psychiatrist Franz Fanon spoke of collective trauma while studying colonial war through the eyes of his patients. He noticed there is social component of trauma: He saw a lot of depersonalization, a condition in which people feel like they have no control over themselves, as if they are observers watching what happens to them. This can happen as a result of chronic stress and trauma.

Fanon’s experiences led him to believe that force and aggression are used to instill fear in people and to make people feel as if it were pointless to fight back. This leads to deep cynicism. Fanon also realized that decolonization did not necessarily free people a colonized mindset of otherness and internalized hatred. This is akin to mental slavery.

Fanon believed that collective trauma is passed down through generations, an assertion shared by Dr. Joy DeGruy, who developed the Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) theory. On her website, Dr. DeGruy states that PTSS is made up by “multigenerational trauma together with continued oppression,” and “the absence of opportunity to heal or access the benefits available in the society.” These conditions were created as a result of slavery, Jim Crow, and other systemic problems rooted in racism. The results are negative self-esteem, hopelessness, depression, self-destruction,

a propensity for anger and violence, and racist socialization or internalized racism. This is a powerful, real-life example of how collective social trauma creates helplessness in people. However, African-Americans are not the only ones who face this sort of internalized learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness is a psychological phenomenon, which can happen to anyone who has tried and failed for far too long to make any kind of needed change. It simply means that people feel like they no longer can influence the outcome of any situation so they stop trying. This theory was developed by Dr. Martin Seligman, who tested animals by putting them in situations. At a certain point, the animals stopped trying to find a way out and just gave up. This applies to human beings as well. Many people have tried to change their circumstances, but if they don’t see results, they “accept” that they cannot do anything about it. Learned helplessness is also directly tied to stress, anxiety, and depression.

### **Cognitive Dissonance**

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon wrote about cognitive dissonance. He noticed that at times “people hold a core belief that is very strong” that even when they are “presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted.” The feeling of discomfort this creates is called cognitive dissonance. Fanon noticed that people experiencing cognitive dissonance “will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn’t fit in with the core belief.” Cognitive dissonance keeps a lot of people from acting differently and participating in meaningful social change. Questioning your own privilege, racism or sexism means you first have to believe you could be racist or privileged. But if you believe that you’re a “good person,” then you won’t readily accept that you could possibly be bigoted, discriminatory, or have an animus or bias. Thus, if you don’t believe you personally don’t need to make changes, it would be difficult to convince you to work towards transforming society.



## Can't Breathe?

Many people are not willing to risk their lives to fight class oppression, but that does not mean there is not resistance building. Eventually people will be willed to act; they will have no other choice because they will be literally fighting for their lives. As Fanon said, people "revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe."

Until that day comes, we must find ways to heal the collective trauma we have all experienced. We need to recognize our common struggles, stand and organize together, support each other, participate in individual and group therapy and reflective listening, utilize mutual aid, and work together towards a non-hierarchical egalitarian society based on transformation and collective liberation.

It is only through the elimination of oppressive forces such as capitalism that we can free ourselves from mental slavery. Moreover, we must have compassion and empathy for those that feel so beaten down that it even hurts to care, let alone act.

When we feel too tired to fight back, we should take a break and get support. But we must regroup and live on to fight another day because social justice doesn't fight for itself. We can allow outside forces to control us, or we can realize we are not powerless -- especially when we band together. It is the solidarity of our comrades that will inspire us to try and try again.

Always remember: You are not alone in your suffering and you are not alone in the struggle to overcome it.

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## What or who keeps you going when you feel too tired to care?

*"I think about the men and women I served with in the Army, and the tough times we went through together. We never gave up and helped pull each other through. I take inspiration from that example of strength and carry on."*

- Marc Train

*"Even when it seems hopeless, I try and think of how far we've come. Civil rights weren't just handed to us on a silver platter. Workplace safety wasn't a gift bestowed upon us by the barons of industry. Women didn't get the right to vote by staying at home and politely asking their husbands to vote for candidates that supported women's suffrage. Real change takes struggle, and radicals have always been on the forefront of that struggle. We win because we don't give up; we take the long view and realize that the better world we fight for isn't going to happen overnight. What makes us radical is our uncompromising dedication to what is right: a better world for all of humanity. We have come a long way, but we have a lot longer way to go — and I know even if I fall, there will be a comrade to pick me up. We are making history."*

- Stephanie Cholensky

*"When I get that feeling or where compas get that feeling is because they are looking at a very large outcome and they don't see an immediate gain. Sometimes it's good to step back. Rest. Make time for family, friends, and lovers. Work on the small immediate victories."*

- Erik Carlos Toren

*"I often find that my tiredness or lack of caring is from things outside the news, and outside politics. ... But at the same time, there's so much worth caring about and fighting for. There are people whose voices aren't often heard. There are issues that are far bigger and wider in scope than our individual problems. I'm also inspired by fellow socialists in California who have so much passion and energy for what they do, even when things are tough for them. Even hearing or seeing my friends talk about political issues can be inspiring. Especially when it's not a friend I expect would care much about issues going on in the world."*



# interview

by LYNN LOMIBAO



“Go look at beautiful things. Spend time with your family, and do things that nourish your spirit. When you get ready, come back into the fray.

It will definitely be here, and we will definitely need you.”

ANGELA NICOLE WALKER



Angela Nicole Walker is a mom, a grandmother, a bookworm, and a Socialist with no law enforcement experience. But after Kshama Sawant's City Council win in Seattle, Angela was inspired to run for Sheriff in her hometown, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Her campaign symbolizes struggle in multiple ways: As a Socialist, she is fighting against the deep-rooted stigma surrounding socialism. As a woman running for sheriff, she is challenging gender norms and sexism in a field that has always been predominantly male. And as a person of color running for a high-level law enforcement position, she is battling racial injustice within one of the very systems that propagates it.

I was introduced to Angela by Arianna Norris-Landry, who insisted that she is someone I MUST interview. Naturally, I stalked Angela's Facebook page to get a feeling for who she is. After learning about her campaign and her background, which includes union experience, anti-war activism and involvement with Occupy the Hood and the Milwaukee Occupy Coalition, all I could think was "Wow. How the hell does she do it?"

Here's what she said.

**LL: Have you ever felt like you were too tired to care?**

**AW:** Lord, yes. I think that with all of the issues we are facing every day, compassion fatigue is a very real thing for a whole lot of people. I was burned out from my transit job, burned out from the work I did for my union, burned out from life, period. So I took some time and hibernated and was ready to come back into the battle again afterward. I think accepting the fact that we are human and that we get tired and sad is important. It's equally important that we don't stay tired and sad.

**LL: What keeps you going?**

**AW:** I think that knowing what is at stake in this world is what keeps me going. Knowledge of my history, the history of both my family and my people, that is sustaining for me. Being able to stand with my comrades and push back against what is

happening to us, that keeps me going.

**LL: What advice would you give to other activists and socialists when they feel like giving up?**

**AW:** I would tell them to take some time out of the struggle and take care of self. Go look at beautiful things. Spend time with your family, and do things that nourish your spirit. When you get ready, come back into the fray. It will definitely be here, and we will definitely need you. But we need you whole and present.

**LL: Who are three people you admire and why?**

**AW:** What a hard question! There are so many people I admire ... if I can only pick three, I would say my grandmother, my mother, and Zora Neale Hurston. My grandmother has always been a light in my life, reminding me that this is a big world and that I have every right, as a Black woman, to get all that it offers. She taught me that I have an obligation to contribute to this world, to help make things better, and to move the history of my people forward. My mother is someone I admire because she has always created beauty and order out of whatever means she has at hand. No matter what, my mom leaves everything better than she found it. Her tenacity is something I am proud to be able to build on in my own life. Zora Neale Hurston is someone I admire because of her ability to explore life, explore possibilities, and respect people where they were and how they were. She was inquisitive and adventurous and never let herself be limited.

**LL: How did you arrive at socialism as an answer to some of the greatest challenges people face?**

**AW:** I think I've been a socialist for longer than I thought. My mom is an anti-capitalist, she just doesn't define her outlook that way, but she is. And I think that her way of thinking, and most of my family's way of thinking made me welcoming to socialism. The belief that human worth is not based on productivity, the concept that everyone should have enough resources to meet their needs and allow them to have a good life, the understanding that the environment is necessary in



itself and deserves human respect and preservation, those things I learned very early and at home. I think a lot of the traditional values held by African-Americans are socialist, and are very relevant today.

**LL: How do people respond to you when you tell them you're socialist?**

**AW:** It's funny. People are either supportive, curious, or silent when I tell them I am a Socialist. I think I've seen more support than anything else. It's refreshing.

**LL: Do you see your campaign for sheriff as an extension of a socialist tradition in Milwaukee? Who are your main supporters, and what surprises have you experienced while engaging the public?**

**AW:** I value history, and I see my campaign for sheriff as a continuation of a socialist tradition in Milwaukee that gave this city wonderful things. If I am elected, I will be the fifth socialist sheriff, but the first Black woman socialist sheriff. My main supporters have been people who are completely disillusioned with politics as usual and are ready to see a different approach taken to addressing the problems here in this county. There are a lot of folks who are very enthusiastic about the resurgence of candidates running for office who are outside the two-party system, and that is exciting for me. As for surprises, I haven't really had any. People have either been very supportive about the campaign, or they have laughed it off. I am humbled by the amount of support that I have received.

**LL: I'm not gonna lie, I stalk your Facebook page to see what you're into. The interview with Tressie McMillan Cottom on Colorlines sticks in my mind. Talk to me about black feminism – what are some main points that feminists often miss or ignore? How does Black feminism relate to issues like mass incarceration and class in Milwaukee and the U.S.?**

**AW:** This is an amazing question, because Black feminism is very close to my heart. I think that

mainstream feminism has to understand that for intersectional feminists like me, who understand that the racial history of the Women's Movement in the United States is very difficult, there are a whole lot of questions. There is a lot of scrutiny. There is a much deeper examination of movements like SlutWalk and others where sexism is the main issue, neglecting the fact that for intersectional feminists, sexism is only one of the ways women are oppressed. The voices and perspectives of women of color have historically been suppressed, and even now are often met with a willful refusal to acknowledge the validity of lived experience and viewpoints. Both Black and Brown feminism have much to say about mass incarceration here in Milwaukee, since it's our communities that are so adversely impacted by this system. These people who are being locked away and denied the opportunity to be full community members, the people being detained and deported, those are our loved ones. It's our communities that are the most disproportionately affected by the lack of living wage jobs available, by the lack of access to transit and fully funded public schools, and fresh, affordable food. Black and Brown women are on the front lines of all of these crises. Mass incarceration and all of the evils that allow it to exist are definitely feminist issues.

**LL: What are you reading right now?**

**AW:** I am currently rereading *When And Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* by Paula Giddings, and *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America*, edited by Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez, Matt Meyer, and Mandy Carter.

**LL: What are three movies you think everyone should watch and why?**

**AW:** "Byzantium," because I love a well-done vampire story; "WattStax," because Black folks are speaking candidly and truthfully about our experience in this country and celebrating that experience, in all of its complexity. "Battle in Seattle," because people need to know how powerful we are when we are united, and that we are called on to speak truth to power. We are truly more powerful than we know.



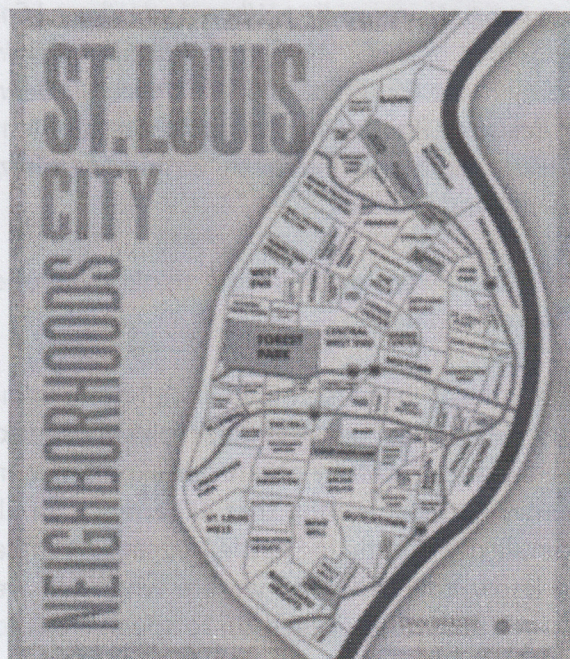
# Meet Me in St. Louis, aka THE FERGUSON FILES

by  
ARIANNA NORRIS-LANDRY

Some history is needed to understand why Ferguson happened. The first totally nuts thing about St. Louis is that the city limits were set in stone in 1863. Right in the middle of the Civil War, Union Army General Grant dictated that boundaries be set. Union troops, including enlisted freed slaves, would be out of reach for the rest of the State of Missouri, which, while it never seceded, remained a slave state. The Union let the state keep their slaves so long as they didn't secede. So a very diverse population resided within the St. Louis city limits, while a white, slave-owning society flourished everywhere else in the state. St. Louis County surrounds the city, but is not a part of it.<sup>1</sup> (See images below.) This concrete division was expanded with an inner-city division along DelMar Boulevard, which runs east to west, starkly dividing the haves from the have-nots. This divide even segregates the cemeteries. When the "DelMar Divide" failed to keep people of color "in their place," there was an attempt to re-concentrate black people to the city center by building public housing units. This effort eventually failed. And when this failed, whites fled to the county. (Read the *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* for more information on this.)

There are 90 municipalities within the 524 square miles that comprise St. Louis County, and more in the surrounding counties. This translates into almost one "city" per square mile. All but a few cities have their own police force, mayor, city manager and town council. Eighty one cities have their own municipal court, while the rest contract out to other police departments, jails and court facilities. Some cities have as few as 700 residents, and Ferguson is one of them. While Ferguson is a fairly diverse

<sup>1</sup> BBC presents: The Delmar Divide St. Louis MO 2012





community for this region, it too has gone through a "race change." Ten years ago, the demographics were two-thirds white and one-third black or "other." Now, it's 79 percent black and 11 percent white. This type of demographic shift is, unfortunately, not uncommon in the area; white people have been moving further and further to the west of the county to avoid communities of color.

So, what occurred in Ferguson and why was white flight the straw that broke the camel's back? Unfortunately, what happened was all too normal. A young black man was stopped by a police officer, something happened, and the young man ended up dead on a St. Louis street. The incident occurred on the weekend, on a really nice afternoon, in the middle of an apartment complex with people of all ages out and about. This means there were people watching as the tragedy played out in the middle of the road.

Even before I got home, texts and pictures showed that Michael Brown lay in the street uncovered for 47 minutes. After someone finally covered his body, he laid there for four more hours. Inexplicably, no one called 911, so no one came to pick up his body. Finally, police stuffed him into the back of a SUV and drove away. I don't know about you, but this offends me on the most basic human level. After the police left at about 7:00 p.m., Michael's mother, with help from her local state legislature representative, scattered rose petals over the blood on the street and placed a candle there. This evolved quickly into an impromptu memorial space. A short time after this, at least two police units returned to the scene. A K-9 officer let his dog out and allowed it to urinate on the memorial. Then they drove off, over the candles and flowers.

How would you feel if someone in your family was subjected to such disrespect in full view of friends and neighbors? I can tell you that Mike's neighbors were very upset. They had noticed that traffic into and out of the apartment complex area had stopped since the initial police response. Perhaps that was why more people coming to witness the tragedy, or growing upset within the neighborhood. Eventually, neighbors decided to walk a block to the main street of West Florissant, where

they started to protest. And so "Ferguson" began.

Much of it was televised, internetized, vined, Facebooked and Tweeted. However, you may not have seen that the initially peaceful crowd of about 100 people prompted the M-Raps, assault rifles, rubber bullets, tear gas and flash bangs prior to looting or arson. Although the media tried desperately to explain events with reference to "a militarized police force," the incidents in Ferguson were first and foremost about racism.

In Ferguson, racism means that the youth suffer under a 50 percent unemployment rate. Most of the jobs available are not "good jobs." In Ferguson, flipping burgers isn't even an option. It means the schools there are so severely underfunded that some become unaccredited. A high school diploma from an unaccredited school is not valid for college admission. Racism means being stopped for your "manner of walking." (Yes, a real charge!) It means being picked up, detained and questioned for hours by the police, who hope you'll turn in a friend or two. It means being stopped for minor traffic infractions so often that you don't even bother to show up to court. It means you don't have money to pay the ticket, which results in a Failure to Appear ticket (more money), along with a Failure to Pay (even more money) ticket, and a warrant. Racism means that you are so ground down by the system that you don't even bother to vote because you've seen too much corruption in the politics around you.

### **Too Tired to Care is Not an Option**

I am not a fully-funded organizer or activist. I spend almost no time at conferences, conventions or trainings. As an independent paralegal and legal observer, I spend time on the streets of North St. Louis. I help people access the system; getting it to work for them, instead of against them. I do this because social justice advocacy is my passion, and I was raised to give back to my community the best way I can. Being "too tired to care" is not an option.

Now that the major press presence is gone, our neighborhoods are overrun by droves of "poverty pimps" and "iPhone activists." These folks did not



come with me four years ago, when I was introduced to the area and told by the residents what they needed. Also, there are now hordes of different organizations forming, putting up websites and launching fundraisers to help the people of Ferguson. A \$100,000 grant was given to one of these local organizations by a national one, but no one knows where the money is now. Hopefully, at least some of the funding and the projects will actually get to the people in Ferguson. There are at least 50 more little St. Louis County towns, as well as North St. Louis, that are bombs waiting to explode.

The people of Ferguson want peace, but they also want justice. They are still protesting, disrupting city and county council meetings, and planning next steps. This is occurring just as the term for the grand jury is extended to January 2015. Perhaps the powers that be don't expect people to march or sleep out in the cold. I bet they are wrong, and I'll be in my usual place: out in the streets with the people.

*ARIANNA NORRIS-LANDRY is a 35+ year veteran of the struggle and the streets. Author of "The Essential Occupier," she is known as AriannaEditrix on Twitter and Wordpress. She is currently lending out her "white privilege card" as a social justice advocate in the North St. Louis neighborhoods and an independent paralegal/legal observer for Southern Illinois and St. Louis Metro Area.*

# Reviving the Spirit of Socialism: an Interview with Charley Earp

by JIM MARRA

**JM:** So Charley, how is it that we now have a "Faith and Socialism" Commission?

**CE:** The Socialist Party USA has officially re-chartered the "Faith and Socialism Commission." The FSC had been around for many years, and was renamed the "Commission on Religion and Ethics" a few years ago, then didn't renew its charter. After some discussion, the National Action Committee (NAC) elected to re-charter the effort under the older name, "Faith and Socialism Commission."

**JM:** (Hum) I'm hearing some words unusual to socialist rhetoric: "faith," "religion," "ethics." Not much of socially necessary labor time here.

**CE:** The proposal that was created in consultation with party leaders is short and to the point.

Hopefully, the Faith & Socialism Commission of the SPUSA aims to:

1. Develop resources and support for SPUSA members for their spiritual enrichment as socialists.
2. Reach out to communities of conscience and spirituality as socialists.
3. Foster peace building and understanding across lines of religious conflict.
4. Create resources and media that develop socialist perspectives on religious, ethical, and spiritual matters.

**JM:** I wonder what sorts of folks are attracted to membership in the Commission. I am a trained philosopher. Philosophy is an avocation that I take seriously. And on occasion, I will



write a short bit of analysis in the Magazine or the Webzine. What about your background, and whom you think might seek membership?

**CE:** The NAC decision also appointed myself, Charley Earp, to be the chair/convener of the FSC. I'm a member of the Chicago SP, a Pentecostal preacher's kid who came to socialism from reading the story of Jesus and his first followers. I've been actively involved with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) for 17 years. I spent several years on the national "Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee" of the "Friends General Conference." I'm planning to begin a second career as a minister in the next few years, including seminary education in the Unitarian-Universalist tradition. My religious philosophy is Universalist, embracing Atheists, Buddhists, Christians, and Pagans, as well as many others.

Above all else, I want everyone to feel like they [Commission members] have a stake in this new beginning. Even though the commission has "Faith" in its name, we need many from outside the "faithful" to be involved. I'm talking directly to atheists especially. Many, many socialists are atheists and any constructive relationship between the religious majority of the US and the atheist minority depends on both sides trying to understand the other better.

**JM:** I think there is a growing consensus within the Party that the FSC can play a significant role in attracting members, or at least spreading the word about the Party's receptive posture to people of faith.

**CE:** Fighting for a democratic socialist movement in the US demands that we actively include religious persons in our party. Christians are over 80-95 percent of the US populace. The churches have spawned radical movements such as the Civil Rights and anti-war movements. Democratic Socialism cannot be won without a vibrant religious community at its heart.

And, we certainly need our Atheists to be right there alongside their religious comrades. Atheists such as Karl Marx have made massively important

contributions to socialist movements. If Atheist and Religious Socialists can succeed where mainstream culture has failed, by uniting all persons across religious barriers in the fight for a better world for everyone, such a movement would be unstoppable.

**JM:** Thanks, Charley. I'm looking forward to soon hearing of the activities of the Commission in The Socialist.

For those interested in following the Faith and Socialist Commission, please like our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/FaithSocialismSPUSA>

Join our members-only discussion at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/faithcommspusa/>

We also have a members-only email listserv: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/faithandsoc-comm>

If you have questions, suggestions, comments, or criticisms contact me: [charley63@mailworks.org](mailto:charley63@mailworks.org).

*JIM MARRA lives in Connecticut and is the current Convener of The Socialist Editorial Board. He received his Doctoral degree from Cornell University in 1977, majoring in Musical Composition and the History of Music Theory. While on the Faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, he completed graduate work at Johns Hopkins University, majoring in the Philosophy of Science. He is a member of the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Philosophy of Science Association. He is a 2014 recipient of the Eugene V. Debs Award.*



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